

(Mr. CORZINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 473, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to clarify the jurisdiction of the United States over waters of the United States.

S. 971

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 971, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide individuals with disabilities and older Americans with equal access to community-based attendant services and supports, and for other purposes.

S. 983

At the request of Mr. CHAFEE, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 983, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to make grants for the development and operation of research centers regarding environmental factors that may be related to the etiology of breast cancer.

S. 1224

At the request of Mr. CORZINE, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1224, a bill to expand the powers of the Attorney General to regulate the manufacture, distribution, and sale of firearms and ammunition, and to expand the jurisdiction of the Attorney General to include firearm products and nonpowder firearms.

S. 1266

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. BREAU), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. CHAFEE), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. DASCHLE), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. HOLLINGS), the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. JEFFORDS), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT), the Senator

from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. NICKLES), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1266, a bill to award a congressional gold medal to Dr. Dorothy Height, in recognition of her many contributions to the Nation.

S. 1379

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1379, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of veterans who became disabled for life while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

S. 1483

At the request of Mr. DODD, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) and the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1483, a bill to amend the Head Start Act to reauthorize that Act, and for other purposes.

S. 1545

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. FITZGERALD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1545, a bill to amend the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 to permit States to determine State residency for higher education purposes and to authorize the cancellation of removal and adjustment of status of certain alien students who are long-term United States residents.

S. 1653

At the request of Mr. INOUE, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. CORZINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1653, a bill to ensure that recreational benefits are given the same priority as hurricane and storm damage reduction benefits and environmental restoration benefits.

S. 1709

At the request of Mr. CRAIG, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) and the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1709, a bill to amend the USA PATRIOT ACT to place reasonable limitations on the use of surveillance and the issuance of search warrants, and for other purposes.

S. 1744

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1744, a bill to prevent abuse of Government credit cards.

S. 1828

At the request of Mr. KYL, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr.

ALLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1828, a bill to eliminate the substantial backlog of DNA samples collected from crime scenes and convicted offenders, to improve and expand the DNA testing capacity of Federal, State, and local crime laboratories, to increase research and development of new DNA testing technologies, to develop new training programs regarding the collection and use of DNA evidence, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 253

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Florida, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. EDWARDS), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 253, a resolution to recognize the evolution and importance of motor sports.

AMENDMENT NO. 2057

At the request of Mr. LUGAR, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. CHAFEE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2057 intended to be proposed to S. 1585, an original bill making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. BOXER:

S. 1845. A bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to provide financial assistance to State and local governments that continue to pay employees who serve on active duty in a reserve component of the uniformed services; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today is Veterans Day—a day to honor the service of those brave men and women who have fought for and defended our country.

This Veterans Day has special meaning as 130,000 Americans are serving in Iraq, and many in this country have lost loved ones in Iraq in the past year.

Americans can be proud of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who are serving today. They are continuing to show the courage, dignity, and bravery with which our veterans, who we honor today, have served in the past.

That rich tradition includes those Americans who serve in the Guard and Reserves. In the 12 years since the first war in Iraq, more than 525,000 members of the Guard and Reserves have been mobilized—more than twice the number that were mobilized in the previous 36 years.

When they are called up to active duty, they leave their civilian jobs—and their civilian salaries—behind. Most take a pay cut—and are glad to do so to serve our country. But when that active duty service becomes an extended tour of duty, the financial strain on the families left behind can be enormous.

To close this pay gap, some State and local governments make up the different between military and civilian pay for their employees who have been activated. Unfortunately, with strains on State and local budgets across the country—as well as the increased demand for more police and firefighters to help fight terrorism and enhance our homeland security—such payments to our Guards and Reservists are a financially difficult option—or not an option at all—for most State and local governments.

That is why I am today introducing the Service to the Country Reimbursement Act. Under my bill, the Federal Government would reimburse State and local governments for the costs of paying the different between the civilian salary and the military pay of a Guard or Reserves member who is activated for more than 30 days.

This legislation will encourage State and local governments to make those payments in order to keep the families financially whole, ensuring that the families of those who serve our country in the Guards and Reserves will not be financially penalized because of the service being made to our country.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in this effort. And I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1845

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Service to Country Reimbursement Act of 2003”.

SEC. 2. ASSISTANCE FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT CONTINUE TO PAY EMPLOYEES WHO SERVE ON ACTIVE DUTY IN A RESERVE COMPONENT OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 of title 37, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 910. Assistance for State and local governments that continue to pay employees who serve on active duty

“(a) CONTINUATION OF CIVILIAN BASIC PAY.—It is the purpose of this section to encourage States and local governments to continue to pay a portion of the civilian compensation of those employees who are also members of a reserve component and are absent from a position of employment with the State or local government under a call or order to serve on active duty for a period of more than 30 days so that the employees receive compensation in an amount that, when taken together with their military pay, is at least equal to their civilian compensation.

“(b) REIMBURSEMENT OFFERED.—At the request of a State or local government that continues to pay all or a portion of the civil-

ian compensation of an employee described in subsection (a), the Secretary concerned shall reimburse the State or local government for the civilian compensation paid by the State or local government for each pay period described in subsection (c), but not to exceed the difference (if any) between—

“(1) the amount of civilian compensation that would otherwise have been payable to the employee for such pay period if the employee's civilian employment with the State or local government had not been interrupted by the service on active duty; and

“(2) the amount of military pay that is payable to the employee for the service on active duty and is allocable to such pay period.

“(c) PAY PERIODS.—Reimbursement shall be provided under this section with respect to each pay period (which would otherwise apply if the employee's civilian employment had not been interrupted) that occurs—

“(1) while the employee serves on active duty for a period of more than 30 days;

“(2) while the employee is hospitalized for, or convalescing from, an illness or injury incurred in, or aggravated during, the performance of such active duty; or

“(3) during the 14-day period beginning at the end of such active duty or the end of the period referred to in paragraph (2).

“(d) EFFECT OF FAILURE TO RETURN TO EMPLOYMENT.—(1) If an employee described in subsection (a), with respect to whom reimbursement is provided to a State or local government under this section, fails to report or apply for employment or reemployment with the State or local government by the end of the period referred to in subsection (c)(3), the employee shall refund to the Secretary concerned the total amount of the reimbursement provided with respect to the employee.

“(2) Subject to paragraph (3), an obligation to refund moneys to the United States imposed under paragraph (1) is for all purposes a debt owed to the United States.

“(3)(A) The Secretary concerned may waive, in whole or in part, a refund required under paragraph (1) if the Secretary concerned determines that recovery would be against equity and good conscience or would be contrary to the best interests of the United States.

“(B) The Secretary concerned shall waive a refund required under paragraph (1) if the Secretary concerned determines that the failure of the employee in question to report or apply for employment or reemployment was due to an injury or disability of the employee that is not the fault of the employee.

“(4) A discharge in bankruptcy under title 11 that is entered less than five years after the end of the period referred to in subsection (c)(3) does not discharge the employee from a debt arising under paragraph (1). This paragraph applies to any case commenced under title 11 after the date of the enactment of this section.

“(e) REGULATIONS.—The Secretaries concerned shall prescribe regulations to carry out this section.

“(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘civilian compensation’ means the wages or salary that an employee of a State or local government normally receives from the employee's employment by the State or local government.

“(2) The term ‘local government’ means an agency or political subdivision of a State.

“(3) The term ‘military pay’ has the meaning given the term ‘pay’ in section 101(21) of this title.

“(4) The term ‘State’ means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and other territories or possessions of the United States.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 of title 37, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 909 the following new item:

“910. Assistance for State and local governments that continue to pay employees who serve on active duty.”.

(c) APPLICATION OF AMENDMENT.—Section 910 of title 37, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to pay periods (as described in subsection (b) of such section) beginning on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

By Ms. SNOWE:

S. 1846. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a presumption of service-connection for certain veterans with hepatitis C, and for the other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to reintroduce legislation I first introduced in the 105th Congress to address a serious health concern for veterans—specifically, the health threat posed by the Hepatitis C virus.

This legislation, the Veterans Hepatitis C Treatment bill, establishes a presumption of service connection for veterans with hepatitis C, provided that certain conditions are met. This bill will enable veterans who contracted Hepatitis C in military service to receive treatment for this condition by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Under this legislation, veterans who received a transfusion of blood during a period of service before December 31, 1992; veterans who were exposed to blood during a period of service; veterans who underwent hemodialysis during a period of service; veterans diagnosed with unexplained liver disease during a period of service; or veterans working in a health care occupation during service, will be eligible for treatment for Hepatitis C at VA facilities.

I have reviewed medical research that suggests many veterans were exposed to Hepatitis C in service, and are now suffering from liver disease and other diseases caused by exposure to this virus. I am troubled that many “Hepatitis C veterans” are not being treated by the VA because they can't prove the virus was service connected, despite the fact that Hepatitis was not isolated until 1989 and could not be tested for until 1990.

Hepatitis C is a hidden infection with few symptoms. However, most of those infected with the virus will develop serious liver disease 10 to 30 years after contracting the virus. For many of those infected, Hepatitis C can lead to liver failure, transplants, liver cancer and death.

And yet, most people who have Hepatitis C don't even know it—and so they don't get treatment until it's too late. It has been estimated that up to 70 percent of the approximately four million Americans with Hepatitis C are unaware that they carry the virus. For those who know they're infected, the

prognosis is promising—some estimates indicate that 50 percent may have the virus eradicated.

Vietnam veterans in particular are just now starting to learn that they have liver disease likely caused by Hepatitis C. Early detection and treatment may help head off serious liver disease for many of them. However, many veterans with Hepatitis C will not be treated by the VA because they must first establish a service connection for their condition—a standard that is virtually impossible to meet.

My colleagues may be interested to know how veterans were likely exposed to this virus. Medical advances during the Vietnam War included rapid evacuation, improved transfusion and high rates of U.S. casualty survival in an era prior to Hepatitis C screening of the blood supply. Blood transfusion is one of the most common ways Hepatitis C is transmitted. Medical transmission of the virus through needles and other medical equipment is also possible in combat. Medical care providers who served in combat, where universal precautions and rubber glove use are often absent, were likely at increased risk as well, and may have, in turn, posed a risk to the service members they treated.

Researchers have discovered that some blood sent from the U.S. was infected with the virus. Researchers and veterans organizations, including the Vietnam Veterans of America, believe that many veterans were infected after being injured in combat and getting a transfusion or from working as a medic around combat injuries.

Yet, veterans cannot establish a service connection because frequently there were no symptoms when they were originally infected while in Vietnam. In addition, while medical records may show a short bout of Hepatitis, Hepatitis C was not known at the time and there was not a test available to detect the virus.

The Hepatitis C infected veteran is essentially in a catch-22 situation: the VA will not provide treatment unless a service connection has been established, but the veterans cannot prove that they contracted Hepatitis C in combat because the science to detect the virus didn't exist. Without legislative authority to treat these veterans, thousands of veterans infected with Hepatitis C while in the service will not receive VA health care testing or treatment.

I believe that in the long run we will actually save money by testing and treating this infection early on. The alternative is much more costly treatment of end-state liver disease and the associated complications, or other disorders.

Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, well respected both within and outside of the medical profession, has said: "In some studies of veterans entering the Department of Veterans Affairs health facilities, half of the veterans have tested positive for [the Hep-

atitis C virus]. Some of those veterans may have left the military with the [Hepatitis C virus], while others may have developed it after their military service. In any event, we need to detect and treat [Hepatitis C] if we are to head off very high rates of liver disease and liver transplant in VA facilities over the next decade."

Some may argue that further epidemiologic data is needed to resolve the issue of service connection. I agree that we have our work cut out for us, and further study should be done. However, there is already a substantial body of research which has firmly established that veterans have a higher incidence of Hepatitis C when compared to non-veterans. We should not ask those who have already sacrificed so much for this country to wait—perhaps for years—for the treatment they deserve while further research is being conducted.

Today is Veteran's Day and we will all take time to honor the sacrifices that these brave men and women have made to defend the freedom of this country and ensure others could live in peace. These veterans shouldn't be asked to fight another battle for the benefits and respect that they have earned.

I hope this legislation will be a constructive step in addressing the health concerns of this Nation's veterans, and I look forward to working with the Veterans Affairs Committee, the VA-HUD appropriators, and veterans groups to meet this emerging challenge.

By Mr. CORZINE:

S. 1847. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a comprehensive program for testing and treatment of veterans for Hepatitis C virus; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I rise today on Veterans Day to introduce the Veterans Comprehensive Hepatitis C Health Care Act. This bill would fundamentally change the way the Department of Veterans Affairs is addressing the growing Hepatitis C epidemic, and would create a national standard for testing and treating veterans with the virus.

Hepatitis C is a disease of the liver caused by contact with the Hepatitis C virus. It is primarily spread by contact with infected blood. The CDC estimates that 1.8 percent of the population is infected with the Hepatitis C virus, and that number is much higher among veterans. Vietnam-era veterans are considered to be at greater risk because many were exposed to Hepatitis C-infected blood as a result of combat-related surgical care during the Vietnam War. In fact, data from the Veterans Administration suggests that as many as 18 percent of all veterans and 64 percent of Vietnam veterans are infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). For many of those infected, Hepatitis C can lead to liver failure, transplants, liver cancer, and death.

And yet, most veterans who have Hepatitis C don't even know it—and often do not get treatment until it's too late. Despite recent advances in treating Hepatitis C, the VA still lacks a comprehensive, consistent, uniform approach to testing and treating veterans for the virus. Only a fraction of the 3.5 million veterans enrolled nationally with the VA Health Care System have been tested to date. Part of the problem stems from a lack of qualified, full-time medical personnel to administer and analyze the tests. Most of the 172 VA hospitals in this country have only one doctor, working a half day a week, to conduct and analyze all the tests. At this rate, it will take years to test the entire enrolled population—years that many of these veterans may not have.

To address this growing problem, I am introducing the Veterans Comprehensive Hepatitis C Health Care Act. This legislation will improve access to Hepatitis C testing and treatment for all veterans, ensure that the VA spends all allocated Hepatitis C funds on testing and treatment, and sets new, national policies for Hepatitis C care. Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen from New Jersey has introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

The bill would improve testing and treatment for veterans by requiring annual screening tests for Vietnam-era veterans enrolled in the VA system, and providing annual tests, upon request, to other veterans enrolled in the VA system. Further, it would require the VA to treat any enrolled veteran who tests positive for the Hepatitis C virus, regardless of service-connected disability status or priority group categorization. The VA would be required to provide at least one dedicated health care professional—a doctor and a nurse—at each VA Hospital for testing and treatment of this disease.

This bill would also increase the amount of money dedicated to Hepatitis C testing and treatment, and would make sure these funds are spent where they are needed most. Beginning in FY04, Hepatitis C funding would be shifted to the Specific Purpose account under the Veterans Health Administration, and would be dedicated solely for the purpose of paying for the costs associated with treating veterans with the Hepatitis C virus. The bill would allocate these funds to the 22 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) based on each VISN's Hepatitis C incidence rate, or the number of veterans infected with the virus.

In addition, this bill will end the confusing patchwork of policies governing the care of veterans with Hepatitis C throughout the nation. This legislation directs the VA to develop and implement a standardized, national Hepatitis C policy for its testing protocol, treatment options and education and notification efforts. The bill further directs the VA to develop an outreach program to notify veterans who have

not been tested for the Hepatitis C virus of the need for such testing and the availability of such testing through the VA. And finally, this legislation would establish Hepatitis C Centers of Excellence in geographic areas with high incidence of Hepatitis C infection.

As I've said, many veterans do not even realize that they may be infected with the Hepatitis C virus, and the VA is doing little to encourage them to get the critical testing they need. The VA currently lacks a comprehensive national strategy for combating this deadly disease. With the passage of the Veterans Comprehensive Hepatitis C Health Care Act, veterans will finally be provided with the access to testing and treatment that they have more than earned and deserve. Additionally, the Federal Government will actually save money in the long run by testing and treating this infection early on. The alternative is much more costly treatment of end-stage liver disease and the associated complications, or other disorders.

The VA has known about the problem of Hepatitis C among veterans since 1992, but they have not acted. We must address this critical issue for the brave men and women who have placed their lives in danger to protect the United States. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this crucial legislation.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1847

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Comprehensive Hepatitis C Health Care Act".

SEC. 2. COMPREHENSIVE HEPATITIS C HEALTH CARE TESTING AND TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1720E the following new section:

“§ 1720F. Hepatitis C testing and treatment

“(a) INITIAL TESTING.—(1) During the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Veterans Comprehensive Hepatitis C Health Care Act, the Secretary shall provide a blood test for the Hepatitis C virus to—

“(A) each veteran who served in the active military, naval, or air service during the Vietnam era or who is considered to be ‘at risk,’ and is enrolled to receive care under section 1710 of this title who requests the test or is otherwise receiving a physical examination or any care or treatment from the Secretary; and

“(B) to any other veteran who requests the test.

“(2) After the end of the period referred to in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall provide a blood test for the Hepatitis C virus to any veteran who requests the test.

“(b) FOLLOWUP TESTING AND TREATMENT.—In the case of any veteran who tests positive for the Hepatitis C virus, the Secretary—

“(1) shall provide such followup tests as are considered medically appropriate; and

“(2) shall provide appropriate treatment for that veteran in accordance with the national protocol for the treatment of Hepatitis C.

“(c) STATUS OF CARE.—(1) Treatment shall be provided under subsection (b) without regard to whether the Hepatitis C virus is determined to be service-connected and without regard to priority group categorization of the veteran. No copayment may be charged for treatment under subsection (b), and no third-party reimbursement may be sought or accepted, under section 1729 of this title or any other provision of law, for testing or treatment under subsection (a) or (b).

“(2) Paragraph (1) shall cease to be in effect upon the effective date of a determination by the Secretary or by Congress that the occurrence of the Hepatitis C virus in specified veterans shall be presumed to be service-connected.

“(d) STAFFING.—(1) The Secretary shall require that each Department medical center employ at least one full-time gastroenterologist, hepatologist, or other qualified physician to provide tests and treatment for the Hepatitis C virus under this section.

“(2) The Secretary shall, to the extent practicable, ensure that each Department medical center has at least one staff member assigned to work, in coordination with Hepatitis C medical personnel, to coordinate treatment options for Hepatitis C patients and provide information and counseling for those patients and their families. Such a staff member should preferably be trained in psychology or psychiatry or be a social worker.

“(3) In order to improve treatment provided to veterans with the Hepatitis C virus, the Secretary shall provide increased training options to Department health care personnel.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1720E the following new item:

“1720F. Hepatitis C testing and treatment.”

SEC. 3. FUNDING FOR HEPATITIS C PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PROGRAM ACCOUNT.—Beginning with fiscal year 2004, amounts appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for Hepatitis C detection and treatment shall be provided, within the “Medical Care” account, through the “Specific Purpose” subaccount, rather than the “VERA” subaccount.

(b) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO VISNS.—In allocating funds appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for the “Medical Care” account to the Veterans Integrated Service Networks, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall allocate funds for detection and treatment of the Hepatitis C virus based upon incidence rates of that virus among veterans (rather than based upon the overall population of veterans) in each such network.

(c) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for Hepatitis C detection and treatment through the “Specific Purpose” subaccount may not be used for any other purpose.

SEC. 4. NATIONAL POLICY.

(a) STANDARDIZED NATIONWIDE POLICY.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and implement a standardized policy to be applied throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system with respect to the Hepatitis C virus. The policy shall include the testing protocol for the Hepatitis C virus, treatment options, education and notification efforts, and establishment of a specific Hepatitis C diagnosis code for measurement and treatment purposes.

(b) OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall, on an annual basis, take appropriate actions to notify veterans who have not been tested for

the Hepatitis C virus of the need for such testing and the availability of such testing from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 5. HEPATITIS C CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish at least one, and not more than three, additional Hepatitis C centers of excellence or additional sites at which activities of Hepatitis C centers of excellence are carried out. Each such additional center or site shall be established at a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in one of the five geographic service areas (known as a Veterans Integrated Service Network) with the highest case rate of Hepatitis C in fiscal year 1999.

(b) FUNDING.—Funding for the centers or sites established under subsection (a) shall be provided from amounts available to the Central Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs and shall be in addition to amounts allocated for Hepatitis C pursuant to section 3.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. SMITH):

S. 1848. A bill to amend the Bend Pine Nursery Land Conveyance Act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to sell the Bend Pine Nursery Administration Site in the State of Oregon; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I am introducing a bill, with my friend and colleague Senator SMITH of Oregon, to amend the Bend Pine Nursery Land Conveyance Act, enacted three years ago, authorizing the sale of the U.S. Forest Service Bend Pine Nursery to the community of Bend, OR, for use as a public park and recreation facility.

In the original bill, Senator SMITH, Congressman WALDEN and I sought to achieve some very basic objectives. We wanted the community of Bend to take title to a property which for many years had been a federally owned plantation for growing pine seedlings, and which will now make a superb park and ball field complex for the use of the community. At the same time, the bill authorized the sale of several other properties in order to raise an account enabling the Forest Service to acquire a new headquarters for the Deschutes National Forest.

In 1999, we drafted the original legislation in very close consultation with the U.S. Forest Service based on the assumption that in so doing, the agency would have the necessary tools and direction to move swiftly to implement the legislation. The intent of the legislation was to have the Forest Service sell the property to the Bend Parks District within a year of its enactment at the estimated value of the property at that time, \$3 million.

Unfortunately, the goodwill built up throughout the drafting process was squandered by the Forest Service. Two years of delays in the implementation of the original legislation resulted in an appraised price of \$5.8 million as opposed to the \$3 million this property was assumed to be worth when the original Bend Pine Nursery Land Conveyance was enacted in 2000. This delay has been inconsistent with the intent

of the original legislation and runs entirely contrary to the interest of Bend taxpayers.

The community has always been more than willing to pay fair value for this property, and their goodwill and their tax dollars should not be wasted any longer.

The bill I introduce today resolves the issues that stand in the way of implementation of this simple land sale in a fair manner, directing the sale to move forward expeditiously for \$3.5 million. That figure is arrived at by assuming the \$3 million value of the property on the day the original Act was passed, allowing for inflation per the Forest Service's calculations, and then deducting the value of acreage that the Forest Service has decided not to sell and 15 acres the Forest Service has the ability to transfer to the local school district at no cost.

I look forward to the expeditious resolution to this issue.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill to be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1848

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SALE OF BEND PINE NURSERY ADMINISTRATIVE SITE.

The Bend Pine Nursery Land Conveyance Act (114 Stat. 2512) is amended—

(1) in section 3—
(A) in subsection (a)—
(i) by striking paragraph (1);
(ii) by redesignating paragraphs (2) through (7) as subparagraphs (A) through (F), respectively, and adjusting the margins appropriately; and
(iii) by striking “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may” and inserting the following:

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary—
“(1) shall offer to sell to the Bend Metro Park and Recreation District in Deschutes County, Oregon, for consideration in the amount of \$3,505,676, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to approximately 170 acres of the parcel of land identified as Tract A, Bend Pine Nursery, as depicted on the site plan map entitled ‘Bend Pine Nursery Administrative Site, May 13, 1999’; and

“(2) may”;
(B) by striking subsection (e)(3); and
(C) by inserting after subsection (f) the following:

“(g) BEND PINE NURSERY ADMINISTRATIVE SITE.—The land conveyed to the Bend Metro Park and Recreation District under section 3(a)(1)—
“(1) shall be used only for recreation purposes; and
“(2) may be developed for those purposes.”.

(2) by redesignating section 6 as section 7; and
(3) by inserting after section 5 the following:

“SEC. 6. CONVEYANCE TO BEND-LA PINE SCHOOL DISTRICT.
“The Secretary, in accordance with section 202 of the Education Land Grant Act (16 U.S.C. 479a), shall convey to Administrative School District No. 1, Deschutes County, Oregon, for no consideration, 15 acres of land located in the northwest corner of the tract described in section 3(a)(1), to be used for educational purposes.”.

“(1) shall be used only for recreation purposes; and
“(2) may be developed for those purposes.”.

(2) by redesignating section 6 as section 7; and
(3) by inserting after section 5 the following:

“SEC. 6. CONVEYANCE TO BEND-LA PINE SCHOOL DISTRICT.
“The Secretary, in accordance with section 202 of the Education Land Grant Act (16 U.S.C. 479a), shall convey to Administrative School District No. 1, Deschutes County, Oregon, for no consideration, 15 acres of land located in the northwest corner of the tract described in section 3(a)(1), to be used for educational purposes.”.

“(1) shall be used only for recreation purposes; and
“(2) may be developed for those purposes.”.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 264—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING VETERANS DAY 2003

Mr. FRIST (for himself, Mr. DASCHLE, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. GRAHAM of Florida, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Mr. DORGAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

Whereas tens of millions of Americans have served in the Armed Forces of the United States during the past century;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of Americans have given their lives while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during the past century;

Whereas the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States have been vital in maintaining our freedoms and way of life;

Whereas the more than 700,000 brave Americans who have sacrificed their lives while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States have ensured that the Nation, which is founded on the principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, shall endure;

Whereas Armistice Day was first proclaimed by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919 to commemorate the November 11, 1918, armistice between the Allies and the Central Powers that ended the fighting of World War I;

Whereas on June 1, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed into law the Act proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day (Public Law 83-380);

Whereas on October 8, 1954, in anticipation of the first nationwide observance of Veterans Day in 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued a presidential proclamation regarding that Veterans Day which states that “[o]n that day let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us consecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain”;

Whereas on November 10, 2003, President George W. Bush issued a presidential proclamation regarding Veterans Day 2003 which states that “[t]oday, our veterans inspire new generations of Americans as we work to defeat terrorism and advance peace. In respect for and recognition of the contributions our service men and women have made to the cause of peace and freedom around the world, the Congress has provided (5 U.S.C. 6103(a)) that November 11 of each year shall be set aside as a legal public holiday to honor veterans”;

Whereas in 2003 the Senate is in session on November 11 despite that date being a public holiday to honor veterans; and

Whereas it is proper that the Senate observe the day with appropriate tributes and commemorations even as it conducts the Nation's business: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate—

(1) that the war dead of the Nation, and veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States, alive or dead, are to be honored for their contributions and sacrifices to preserve the Nation and the principles of freedom, justice, and democracy that all Americans hold dear; and

(2) that Veterans Day 2003 shall be commemorated with appropriate tributes to all veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States for their contributions and sacrifices, and most especially to those who made the ultimate sacrifice; and

(3) that all Americans shall be encouraged to join the Senate in honoring and paying tribute to veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States, both on Veterans Day and throughout the year.

SENATE RESOLUTION 265—RECOGNIZING AND HONORING THE FIREFIGHTERS AND OTHER PUBLIC SERVANTS WHO RESPONDED TO THE DEVASTATING OUTBREAK OF WILDFIRES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IN OCTOBER 2003

Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 265

Whereas in late October 2003, southern California experienced multiple simultaneous devastating wildfires that destroyed thousands of homes, took many lives, and burned hundreds of thousands of acres of grasslands and forests, exceeding the devastation of any fires in the past century;

Whereas in the space of a few days, all of the resources of local firefighting companies were called on to man fire lines, first on 1 front and then on many fronts;

Whereas firefighters were thrown into extraordinarily dangerous situations because of the fast-moving, fuel- and wind-driven fires;

Whereas firefighters exhibited resilience and courage by continuing to stay on the lines, often in back-to-back shifts, while knowing, in some instances, that their own families were in danger or that their personal homes had been lost;

Whereas 1 firefighter, Steven Rucker, made the ultimate sacrifice by giving his life;

Whereas the firefighters who were called initially were later assisted by skilled and courageous pilots, who flew water-drop flights in the most challenging wind and smoke conditions, and by firefighters from throughout the State of California and neighboring States;

Whereas additional emergency personnel, including law enforcement and medical personnel, have coordinated with local authorities and firefighters and have performed beyond the call of duty in the preservation and protection of human lives; and

Whereas members of the Armed Forces have once again met their country's call to duty, providing valuable firefighting assets and assistance to the emergency response efforts of California: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes and honors all of the firefighters who responded to the devastating outbreak of wildfires in southern California in October 2003;

(2) recognizes and honors all others, including emergency, law enforcement, and medical personnel, pilots, and members of the Armed Forces, for their important contributions to controlling the wildfires and keeping Californians safe; and

(3) commends the firefighters and other personnel for dedicated service to the people of California.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2148. Mr. LUGAR (for himself, Mrs. BOXER, and Mr. SANTORUM) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 1828, to halt Syrian support for terrorism, end its occupation